

Rainbow Reveille

April 2005

Volume 1, Issue 2

Soldiers
in
Samarra

TASK FORCE



LIBERTY

NEVER
FORGET

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On the cover

Army Pfc. Justin Reyes, infantryman, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Liberty, scans the buildings above a city street during a momentary pause while patrolling. The unit conducts frequent dismounted patrols, checking on the local civilians and small businesses around the Tikrit area of Iraq. (photo by Sgt. Matthew Acosta, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



An M60 machinegunner from 502nd Engineer Battalion, watches for insurgents onshore while the patrol boat he is protecting transports Soldiers to an island on the Tigris River in support of Operation River Street, March 26.



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Task Force makes progress in Iraq

Task Force Liberty continues to make progress in Iraq. Our team has been aggressive and successful in forwarding the momentum of our Iraqi Army and Police partners. We continue to protect the process in which Iraqis shall secure their future. I commend the entire task force for this effort.

In our first month of operations, our Soldiers have detained, captured or killed more than 700 suspected insurgents. Many of these joint operations were conducted alongside our Iraqi Army and Police partners. More than 2,200 rounds of ammunition, 700 mines and 100 rocket propelled grenade launchers have been removed from the area. Nearly 100 improvised explosive devices were discovered before they could cause harm to local Iraqis or our combat patrols.

At the same time, the seating of the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly marked the beginning of Iraqi civil authority for their future. We look forward



Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto

to our continued partnership with local and regional Iraqi Security Forces and their political leadership.

Together, we will continue to diminish the enemy's ability to spread violence and intimidation throughout AO Liberty.

However, our efforts have not been

without a price. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to the families and loved ones of Task Force Liberty Soldiers who have made the supreme sacrifice. We remain committed to moving our mission further downfield in their honor.

Part of that commitment must be a renewed look at our own safety measures. I commend each of you for your initiative and aggressiveness in taking this fight to our enemy. At the same time, I challenge leaders at every level to ensure that we understand the risks we take.

This operating environment is very unforgiving to unprepared or inattentive Soldiers. Double your efforts to include risk assessment and risk reduction efforts in everything we do. A lack of seatbelts and excessive speed can kill just as easily as an IED or indirect fire attack. Remain vigilant in all that you do.

NEVER FORGET!

Liberty 6

Army values teach, tell who we are

As we all get into our "battle rhythm", there is a constant that separates our Army from others. This constant is the Army values that guide each of you, our leaders and the total Army. Army values teach us and tell the rest of the world, the civilian government we serve, the nation we protect, friend and foe alike, "*who we are and what we stand for*."

The Seven Army Values are not just a smart card in your wallet, or an additional tag on the chain around your neck. They remind us what we need to be, everyday, and in every action we take;

1. Loyalty: It extends to all members of all components of the Army. All on the same team and loyal to one another. Loyalty is commitment to the Soldier next to you, your leaders and your unit. It's a two way street, never expect it without giving it in return.

2. Duty: Is accomplishing the task assigned to you to the best of your ability. Never be content with doing the minimum. Duty is doing your job in the absence of orders or direction. It's all about doing what's right and following through to conclusion.

3. Respect: The basis for the very rule of law and what makes our country great, is respect. Effective leaders are open to different views than their own. It's this openness that gains respect and thus builds the



Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Fearnside

cohesion in the team. When we conduct performance counseling of Soldiers, we continually reinforce the fact that respect for others is part of the character of every Soldier in our Army.

4. Selfless Service: Soldiers placing their own needs below those of their unit, squad or section is the essence of selfless service. A selfless leader gives credit to those who earned it rather than themselves. TF Liberty must work as a team. For that to work, personal interests must be set aside for the good of all.

5. Honor: We all have a strong sense

of right and wrong. If we live those senses every day, and "walk the talk", then those character traits equate to an honorable person. This is the glue that holds the Army and its values together. Honor means putting Army values above self interest and personal goals.

6. Integrity: Do the right thing, both legally and morally. Integrity runs with honesty. High moral standards and honesty will never fail you. Leaders and Soldiers alike are always on display. Present yourself and actions for what they are, and say what you mean and do what you say.

7. Personal Courage: Takes two forms, both physical and moral. Physical courage means overcoming fears of bodily harm and executing your duty. It's about setting aside and overcoming your fears to accomplish the mission. Moral courage on the other hand, is about standing firm on your values, principles and convictions at the expense of individual consequences. It's demanding the best out of everyone.

As we continue operations in TF Liberty, Army Values will continue to provide the direction with which we'll all accomplish our mission and return home to our loved ones safely. You are the best, in the best Army in the world!

NEVER FORGET!

Liberty 7

LIBERTY

ON PATROL

*2nd Battalion, 7th
Infantry Regiment
walks the streets of
Tikrit*

*Photos by Sgt. Matthew Acosta
22nd Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment*



Pfc. Jeff Dubasik (left) and Cpl. Adrian Cavasos, infantrymen, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, dismount during a routine foot patrol in a small suburb of Tikrit, Iraq.



Sgt. Eric Brocaille, infantryman, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, pauses outside an Iraqi restaurant in Tikrit, Iraq.



Sgt. 1st Class Eric Flynn, platoon sergeant 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, Task Force Liberty, gives a box of candy to an Iraqi child while patrolling the streets of Tikrit, Iraq.



Cpl. Adrian Cavasos, infantryman, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, plays a video game with an Iraqi child during a routine stop on a dismounted patrol through Tikrit, Iraq.



Pfc. Justin Reyes, infantryman, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, patrols past a garbage-filled lot in Tikrit.

getting the goods

Support battalion brings supplies, pieces of home

Story, photos by Sgt. Blake Kent
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, TIKRIT, Iraq – For the Soldiers of Company B, 50th Maintenance Support Battalion, the open roads of Iraq are home for the next year.

Company B Soldiers from the Minnesota Army National Guard are part of the 42nd Infantry Division Support Command. The New Jersey based-unit is deployed to Tikrit, Iraq and includes Soldiers from around the country, including the 200 Co. B Soldiers and others from New York, New Jersey, California, Montana and Washington, D.C.

The support battalion's main mission is conducting logistical convoys, delivering food, water, mail and other needed supplies to outlying forward operating bases.

The Soldiers of the 50th MSB convoy throughout the country, with trips ranging from Forward Operating Base Warrior, near Kirkuk, to Kuwait, which requires the Soldiers to spend many hours on the dangerous roads of Iraq.

“(FOB) Speicher is a major supply point for the outlying FOBs,” said 1st Sgt. Stan Sabin of Austin, Minn., Co. B, 50th MSB, of the importance of their center of operations. “We have been extremely fortunate. We have only hit five (improvised explosive devices). I think we have really made our own luck with good tactics, techniques and procedures that have helped keep our Soldiers safe.”

Running daily combat logistical patrols requires a lot of planning. The 50th MSB begins planning its missions 72 hours out, with changes made up to the time the convoy is leaving the gate. It is a constant coordination of vehicles, supplies, missions and Soldiers, Sabin said.

Because of the large distances that are being covered along with the changing threat conditions, the convoys keep in constant contact with the center of operations.

The 50th MSB vehicles are equipped with computer systems that



Soldiers of Company B, 50th Main Support Battalion, load trailers with equipment to be taken to Forward Operating Base Bernstein in Iraq.



Sgt. Raymond Toman of Austin, Minn., Company B, 50th Main Support Battalion, guides a personnel carrier onto a trailer to be hauled to Forward Operating Base Bernstein, Iraq.

allow Soldiers to send and receive e-mail communications with the operations center. They can receive updates on convoy conditions, such as spotted IEDs, vehicle-borne IEDs and attacks, as well as send back information on problems and issues they are having.

The Soldiers do more than drive the trucks in the combat logistical patrols though; they also conduct loading and downloading operations, maintenance operations and act as their own security on convoy operations.

Prepping the vehicles and trailers for conveying requires ensuring all the loads are properly secured and conducting preventative maintenance checks and services on their equipment.

It takes about 20 minutes to prep each trailer, said Staff Sgt. Darrin Schmidt of Swanville, Minn., Co.B, 50th MSB. “These are fun,” he said about loading equipment onto trailers, “it’s a challenge every time.”

The maintenance teams conduct operations 22 hours-a-day in order to keep the convoy teams on the road, and the Soldiers cross-trained to run gun-truck escort operations for the logistical convoys, requiring them to practice tactics

and techniques that are not commonplace in their skill training.

The 50th MSB is running convoy operations daily in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III, as part of the first National Guard Division headquarters to be deployed overseas for combat since World War II.

Liquid treasure lies at the end of the

RAINBOW

N.J. Guard unit provides Soldiers with purified water, good health

Story, photo by Spc. Adam Phelps
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE COBRA, Iraq -- New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers provide purified water daily to Soldiers on Forward Operating Base Cobra, Sadiyah, Iraq.

The priority of Soldiers from 50th Main Support Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division, is to make sure troopers coming in from a long days work have clean water.

"Our mission is to provide water to the dining facility, showers and anywhere else that may need it," said Spc. James Spasoff, one of the Soldiers who purifies the water.

To make well water ready for use it must be chlorinated, he said.

"We pull water out of a well and put it into a tank, and then we purify it," said Spasoff, a native of Lake Station, Ind. "After the water is purified, we send it to the bag (water containment system) where we have the water chlorinated.

"Soldiers would get sick without treated water. If it doesn't have the right (amount of) chlorine in it, it won't kill bacteria," he added. "Soldiers could get diarrhea, and that wouldn't be a pretty sight."

Purifying water is rewarding, Spasoff said.

"We're not in the field like the rest of the cavalry," he said. "It feels good to know when they come back, the water situation is one thing they don't have to worry about. They can brush their teeth, shower and shave and not have to worry about a shortage. It's all taken care of."

One trooper said he thought the Soldiers who purify the water are definitely on top of their job.

"They run everyday to get water to everyone," said Sgt. David Roach, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team. "It's not potable, but we still need it for a lot of things.

"We're out here busting down (tank) tracks and it keeps the flames down from the blow torch," Roach said. "They keep us with hot showers every night. They also keep the sanitation stations up so we can keep our hands sanitized, keeping us from getting sick."



Spc. James Spasoff, (left) 42nd ID 50th Main Support Battalion, starts a generator so they can begin the process of purifying water for Forward Operating Base Cobra.

**"Soldiers could get
diarrhea, and that wouldn't
be a pretty sight."**

*-- Spc. James Spasoff
water purification specialist
50th Main Support Battalion*

Each day the Soldiers pump from 27,000 to 32,000 gallons of water from the well, he added.

One Soldier from the water crew, which consists of four soldiers randomly picked from the 50th MSB at Forward Operating Base Speicher, said they are treated very well.

"The Soldiers at FOB Cobra treat us really good here," Spasoff said. "They treat us like we're one of them. We're just a small group attached to the (BCT)."

From the very first day, the 278th has made sure the water crew has everything they need to get the job done. If the water team has any problems the BCT takes care of it, he added.

"Some people don't think it's an important job to do here, they think it's easy and not something that needs to be done," Spasoff said.

"But when the Soldiers (are) out there everyday fighting and pulling security, they want a nice hot meal and hot shower. We provide that for them -- some of the amenities of home. That gets them to step away from all the fighting and relax and kick back for a little bit."

Cpl. Christopher Chladny, Cavalry Scout UAV pilot, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Task Force Liberty, hand launches the Army's Raven unmanned aerial vehicle. The Raven is used regularly on patrols with the scouts and provides a "birds-eye view" of a large area to make search and observation operations easier without subjecting the Soldiers to battlefield dangers.



Eyes in the sky UAVs spy out enemy forces

**Story, photos
by Sgt. Matthew Acosta**
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq - In a continuing effort to minimize casualties and maximize operational capabilities, Army units routinely utilize aerial reconnaissance and surveillance operations to provide commanders with a bigger picture of the battlefield without sending pilots into danger.

Since Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm and now in Operation Iraqi Freedom, unmanned aerial vehicles have increasingly made their mark assisting in Army combat operations, relaying "real-time" visual battlefield information for immediate or future analysis.

"A UAV can extend a commander's ability to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance missions over extended open areas in a fraction of the time it would take to scour and search any given area, with far less personnel committed to the operation," said Lt. Sean Crowley, cavalry scout platoon leader, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Task Force Liberty.



Staff Sgt. Joshua Rygiel, Cavalry Scout UAV pilot, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Task Force Liberty, completes a pre-flight data card before launching the Army's smallest UAV, the Raven.

The Department of Defense has been experimenting with UAVs from as early as July 1985. As a result, there are numerous models of UAVs being produced by private companies world-wide, ranging from large fixed-wing and rotary-winged aircraft to small hand-launched units no bigger than a model airplane.

However, the U.S. Army has streamlined the available variety into a small effective fleet of just three models of battlefield UAVs; Shad-



Cpl. Christopher Chladny, Cavalry Scout UAV pilot, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Task Force Liberty, inspects the Raven during a pre-flight systems check.



Cavalry Scout UAV pilots, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Task Force Liberty, assemble the Army's smallest UAV, the Raven.

The use of these “model airplanes” has encouraged units to adjust their tactical planning to take advantage of this aerial asset. They have enabled Army units to function with fewer men involved with intelligence gathering missions and combat operations while still safely conducting them, either day or night.

The UAVs have also been successfully employed in forward operating base perimeter-security patrols and many urban operations.

“What used to take us all day with several teams of Soldiers and many vehicles we can now effectively search in a fraction of the time,” said Crowley. “If we find anything suspicious, we record the GPS (global positioning system) coordinates and dispatch a team out to the area. Then we can watch over our guys as they enter the area.”

“Although it’s a small bird, it’s still pretty technically advanced,” said Cpl. Christopher Chladny, cavalry scout and UAV pilot. “It can be flown by remote control from the ground station or its navigational system can be programmed with up to five GPS coordinates.”



An Army Raven crash lands on the street after a successful surveillance mission in Tikrit, Iraq. The unmanned aerial vehicle is designed to dismantle on impact to absorb the shock of the landing.

Once programmed, the Raven can circle above its intended target along plotted coordinates sending back visual data continuously without pilot guidance.

Chladny said if the Raven ever loses

contact with the control unit, it has an automatic “return to launch point” mode. The mode can also be manually used by the pilot to recall the UAV with a single button.

ow, Hunter and the Raven.

Unlike the Shadow and Hunter models, the Raven is relatively small in size. This makes the Raven a highly deployable kit which can fit in the back of a Humvee with ease.

The Raven is a hand-launched (thrown) model with a wingspan of four feet, three inches and a length of three feet, seven inches.

“We fly the smallest UAV the Army has; it’s just big enough to carry a small high-resolution camera, night-vision camera or infrared heat-sensing camera, global positioning system and transmitter to send the visual information back to the control unit or to higher-up headquarters,” said Crowley.

Since then we added a small high-visibility strobe light to the body of the plane so if we lose another one, we’ll be able to see it in the dark from a long way out with night vision equipment.”

“The complete Raven kit comes with enough parts to assemble three complete UAVs, two flight-control consoles and a digital-video camera to record the video image relayed back to the control unit,” said Staff Sgt. Joshua Rygiel, cavalry scout squad leader.

The Raven lacks traditional wheeled landing gear but is equipped with a high-impact belly pad to absorb impact when power to the motor is cut off 30-to 50-feet above the ground. It is designed to resist damage by coming apart as it contacts the ground, absorbing the



Cpl. Christopher Chladny (right) and Staff Sgt. Joshua Rygiel, both Cavalry Scout UAV pilots, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Task Force Liberty, program grid coordinates into the Raven's navigation computer.

The UAV system comes with three complete UAVs, two controllers and a digital video recorder, as well as an assortment of specialized cameras adapted to fit inside the aircraft.

Although only one controller is needed to fly the Raven, the additional controller is used as a back-up.

impact of the landings.

“Just about every landing is like a controlled crash,” Rygiel said. “It looks like a dead bird falling from the sky.”

“We retrieve it and immediately check for damage,” he added. “We then reassemble it, change the battery and perform a few flight checks, then launch it back into the air. The whole process can take as little as 6 to 8 minutes.”

Rygiel said the units can be flown continuously, alternating one after the other to replace batteries, but usually they only fly two to three UAV missions daily.

“It’s a huge money maker,” Crowley said. “We can easily adapt missions on-the-fly out there from routine patrol to surveillance or (intelligence) gathering with virtually no loss of time trying to reorganize things.”

Although some units had classes on piloting the Ravens while in Kuwait, the pilots were trained one month prior to deployment at a two-week course at the Army’s Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala.

Chladny said the training he had was a “crash-course” in piloting, but with enough practice anyone can do it, making the Raven UAV system a Soldier-friendly system in more ways than one.

UAVs are playing a large role in military operations in Iraq from intelligence gathering missions to planning future combat operations while providing “over-watch” for Soldiers engaged in combat operations.



After spending a month in Iraq, Soldiers of Task Force Liberty had their flags lowered and their combat shoulder sleeve insignia sewn on to their desert combat uniforms. (Photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Fearnside, 42nd Infantry Division, wears his shoulder sleeve insignia during a combat patch award ceremony at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Daniel Bailey, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Task Force Liberty Earns Combat Patch

A month after Task Force Liberty Soldiers off control of their area of operations in Iraq, they were with the Rainbow patch, but this time the patch has meaning. The Soldiers of Task Force Liberty are s combat patches. The insignia is the same as the 42 Division's patch that is worn on the Soldiers' left s Soldiers who have deployed the combat patch wor shoulder means a whole lot more. It means that the alongside their comrades as they work to bring den Iraqi people.



Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto, Task Force Liberty Commander, signs the combat shoulder sleeve insignia of a 42nd Infantry Division Soldier after a combat patch ceremony at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq. (Photo by Sgt. Daniel Bailey, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

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Soldiers from the 278th Regimental Combat Team, Tennessee Army National Guard and members of Task Force Liberty receive their unit combat shoulder sleeve insignia during a combat patch award ceremony. (Photo by Sgt. Daniel Bailey, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



Unit gets close to enemy

Photos, story by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD MORA, Samarra, Iraq – The mission of long-range surveillance Soldiers is changing and shortening the distance between them and their targets of interest.

Long-range surveillance Soldiers, like those from Task Force Liberty's 173rd Long-Range Surveillance (Airborne), East Greenwich, R. I., are cutting the distance between themselves and enemy forces in Iraq by inserting closer to the insurgents trying to disrupt the country's progress.

"It is easy to pull the trigger," said Capt. Michael P. Manning, commander of the 173rd, and a native of North Kingstown, R.I. "What we really do is intelligence collection."

While preparing for the LRS missions in Iraq the Soldiers are working to change their tactics because they are not doing traditional long-range surveillance, said Staff Sgt. John Shimkus, team leader for LRS Team 1.

"Before, we were a passive unit," Shimkus said. "Now we go out and can actually engage the enemy."

Manning said traditional LRS Soldiers maintain around a 100-kilometer distance from the target of interest, but without a distinctive front line in Iraq, the LRS Soldiers are getting closer and are no longer just intelligence gatherers. They are now able to take action when necessary, he said.

"If the conditions are right, I can interdict," Manning said. "If I see guys laying an (improvised explosive device), I have the means and ability to kill (them)."

Traditionally, before a mission, LRS Soldiers were given 48 to 72 hours of preparation time, which consisted of planning and rehearsals. But with today's tactics, that much time is not required, he said.

"We don't have the luxury or need it," he said. "We take 12 to 24 hours to prepare."

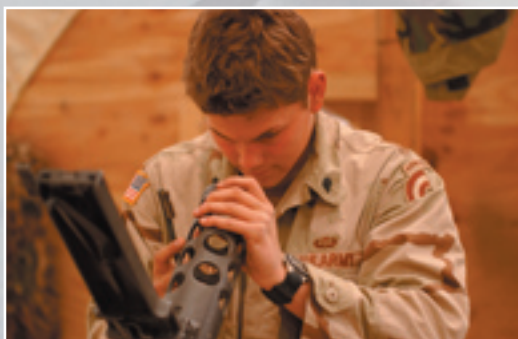
Because the Soldiers' base of operations is close to the areas they conduct surveillance in, they are able to save

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Sgt. Phillip Wagoner, senior scout for Team 4, 173rd Long Range Surveillance Detachment and native of Bristol, R.I., cleans his weapon March 8, at Forward Operating Base Brassfield Mora, Samara, Iraq.



Spc. Nathan Deitch, assistant radio telephone operator for Team 4, 173rd Long Range Surveillance Detachment cleans a 50 cal. heavy machine gun.

"We never had vehicles," Manning said. "We went in by helicopters or jumped in."

Using humvees provides Soldiers with a way to quickly leave their area of operation if their position is compromised and also allows them to slip away under the darkness with the use of their night vision equipment.

But Manning said it isn't the equipment that keeps the Soldiers safe, it is the leadership of his noncommissioned officers and the skills of all the Soldiers.

"It is the NCOs that drive everything in this unit," Manning said. "They know field craft and they know communications. What we are doing is long duration observations and it takes really disciplined guys."

Soldier 'makes leaders'

Story, photos by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD MORA, Samarra, Iraq – When Staff Sgt. John Shimkus served on active duty with the 75th Ranger Regiment, he lived up to the motto, “Rangers lead the way,” and after 20 years of service, he continues to set the example for his long-range surveillance Soldiers.

The LRS Soldiers of Task Force Liberty’s Team 1, 173rd Long-Range Surveillance (Airborne), know that Shimkus’ leadership has molded them into highly trained and confident Soldiers.

Shimkus is a noncommissioned officer who can take a Soldier who is having problems and turn them into a super Soldier, said Capt. Michael P. Manning, 173rd commander, and native of North Kingstown, R.I.

Shimkus has been in the Army more than 20 years and grew up as a Soldier in the 75th, the Army’s finest light infantry unit, Manning said.

“He does LRS as well as anyone,” Manning said. “He is a true warrior, humble and physically and mentally tough. The standard he learned at the ranger regiment, he has taken with him.”

Shimkus, a native of Foxboro, Mass., agrees that his time with the rangers has influenced how he operates.

“It was a good place to grow up,” he said. “It sets the standards.”

Although this is Shimkus’ first combat deployment, he said he has seen many places during his time in the Army.

“We went all over the world,” he said. “We trained in Germany, England, and conducted border patrols in Texas.”

Sgt. Robert Sloat, assistant team leader, said he has been in the unit for 12 years and wanted for almost that long to work with Shimkus.

“I probably waited 10 years to get on his team,” said Sloat, a native of Bristol, R.I. “He is the reason why I’m still here.”

“He knows what he is doing,” Sloat said. “He knows his job. He is everything a NCO should be – physically and mentally tough. I couldn’t have asked for a better team or better mission.”

Spc. William D. Turner, junior scout for Team 1 and native of Lawrence, Mass., said Shimkus has helped in making him into the Soldier he is today.

“He is an NCO that makes leaders out of people,” Turner said. “I never thought I would know the things that I know. It is because of good leadership, he has infinite knowledge with (long-range surveillance) operations.”

“I find myself lucky, being put on Team 1,” Turner said.

Shimkus’ team consists of himself and five other Soldiers whose mission is to get out and gather intelligence on anti-



Staff Sgt. John Shimkus (right), team leader for Team 1, 173rd Infantry Detachment (Airborne) and native of Foxboro, Mass., works out an infiltration plan with Staff Sgt. Tommy O'Hare, a 173rd team leader, as they prepare to conduct a long range surveillance mission March 8. The long-range surveillance Soldiers are part of Task Force Liberty and are based out of East Greenwich, R. I.

Iraqi Forces in Iraq and report back to their command with any intelligence they gather. They are trained to blend in to the terrain and go unnoticed by the enemy, and are capable of acting when required to eliminate the enemy target.

Soldiers in Samarra

Home away from Home

Soldier turns tent into condo

Story, photos by
Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASS-FIELD MORA, Samarra, Iraq – While some deployed to Iraq live in palaces, previously owned by former dictator Saddam Hussein, others are making tents home for the next year.

Spc. Christopher E. Azevedo, a long range surveillance Soldier with the 173rd Long Range Surveillance Detachment (Airborne), 42nd Infantry Division, doesn't see living in a tent as a set back. The poncho liner and flag walls, which separate him from the other Soldiers in his unit, were just the foundation of what is now his home away from home.

The room contains Azevedo's cot, a desk and chair, as well as storage for books, clothes, food and entertainment items, but Azevedo didn't go to the local store to buy these luxuries. He took his carpentry skills and transformed his eight by nine and a half foot area into his own personal condominium.

With supplies like cardboard boxes, mosquito net poles, left over cot pieces, tape, rope and small pieces of plywood in hand, Azevedo took eight hours to build a getaway in the middle of a combat zone.

He said no matter how long they stay in the tents, for now it is comforting to have a place where he can put all of his stuff and hang his family photos.

"I'm use to having my own space," Azevedo said. "It helps to have my area to come back to. It is just nice to have a place to go back and reflect on things."

Azevedo, who is 34 years old and a native of New Bedford, Mass., started his military career in the Navy and said he learned how to maximize his space while onboard



Spc. Christopher E. Azevedo, a long range surveillance Soldier with the 173rd Long Range Surveillance Detachment (Airborne) and a native of New Bedford, Mass., writes a letter home from his room he constructed out of supplies like cardboard boxes, mosquito net poles, leftover cot pieces, tape, rope and small pieces of plywood.

a ship.

"Two junior Navy officers would share this amount of space," said Azevedo about the size of his room.

Azevedo's room may be small in the eyes of some, but it keeps his morale high and is inspiring other Soldiers like Spc. John Leonard to think about making some modifications to his living space.

"It is pretty ingenious," Leonard said. "He has so much stuff. He



A look at the handmade desk of Spc. Christopher E. Azevedo. He constructed his room out of supplies like cardboard boxes, mosquito net poles, tape, rope and small pieces of plywood.

calls it his tactical operations center. It is neat and organized. He has an inventive mind."

Leonard said that Azevedo has not only improved his living space but strives to improve everything.

"He is always trying to improve anything he does," Leonard said. "He likes to make things a little bit more comfortable."

While in Iraq, Azevedo's unit's mission is to gather intelligence through operations in which the unit's Soldiers blend into their target area and watch for any terrorist activity by anti-Iraqi forces.

The Soldiers then report any information they gather and if they need to they take the necessary actions to stop the insurgents.



Spc. Antonio Barrett, a native of Shreveport, La., and food service specialist with 3rd Forward Support Battalion, serves macaroni and cheese.

Cooks lift morale through hot meals

Story, photo

by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD-MORA, Samarra, Iraq – Meals, ready to eat are not what most Soldiers would call an appetizing meal, but in order to provide Soldiers with an alternative, food service personnel are working long hours to prepare hot meals for the Soldiers here as well as those at surrounding patrol bases.

Food service specialists from Company F, 3rd Battalion 69th Armor are not only working hard to provide Soldiers with two meals-a-day, but they are also responsible for preparing and cooking meals for outlining patrol bases at least once every three days, said Sgt. Joshua Davis, senior first cook for the company and native of Albany, N.Y.

“Our mission now is to conduct food service operations for roughly 2,000 people,” Davis said. “We send chow out to surrounding areas near Samarra, and just provide basic food services for the Soldiers that come here.”

Davis said one of the reasons he enjoys his job is because he gets to see the satisfaction Soldiers get from eating a hot meal.

“One of the greatest moral boosters is

coming in here everyday and seeing them smile because they are getting hot chow,” he said. “We just try to provide a quality and nutritious meal for these guys.”

Spc. Craig G. Latimore, a food service specialist and native of Atlanta, said the Soldiers’ reaction to the meals has had an effect on him as well.

“It is a moral booster for them, and also for me,” Latimore said. “I was at another FOB, and when I got here they were real pleased to see me.”

The duty day for Latimore and the rest of the cooks is a long one, Davis said.

“On a normal day we will be here at three in the morning and we start cooking right at three-thirty, four o’clock,” he said. “Breakfast is usually the easiest meal. The dinner meal has to deal with a lot more food to process, and we push out a lot more food to the guys at other camps.”

Sgt. Josh Heywood, assistant team leader for the 173rd Long Range Surveillance Detachment and a native of Johnston, R.I., said he is glad that he is at a base that is able to provide the Soldiers with meals twice a day.

“It is nice to get hot chow whenever you can,” Heywood said. “I’m happy with it. It could be worse.”

Davis said they try to make the dining facility a place where the Soldiers like to

come, and they try to make the food lines look better with a few culinary art skills.

“The last couple of days we have been able to garnish the line,” said Davis. “Myself and a couple of the other guys have been taking melons and stuff and making swans out of them just to make the line look a lot nicer.”

The food service specialists try to cook an assortment of meals during the week when the rations are available to them, Davis said.

“Some days we pick up a steak and lobster meal and we push that out,” he said. “It all really varies on what we have in rations. We always try to get a variety of food so that we are not having the same thing constantly.”

Davis said the cooks are here to support the Soldiers, and they want to make the Soldiers’ time away from home as comfortable as it can be.

“We wish we could do more for them,” Davis said. “We work with what we’ve got and we try to make it the best for them and it really shows as they come here, sit down and eat. We rarely hear one complaint.”

“All in all, it’s good to see that Soldiers actually appreciate cooks,” he said.

Soldiers in Samarra



Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, Task Force Liberty, recover a disabled tank in Samarra, Iraq.

Mechanics evolve within UA structure

Story, photos by Sgt. Blake Kent
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD-MORA, SAMARRA, Iraq – Soldiers of a maintenance company have taken on new responsibilities maintaining a large variety of vehicles since the Army's transformation to Units of Action.

The Soldiers of Company F, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, Task Force Liberty have added new dimensions to their day-to-day operations since being deployed to Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora – they do many things that they never did before.

Units of Action are brigade-sized elements which have built-in command and support elements, which allow them to deploy faster to any part of the world.

While the common perception of maintenance Soldiers is of working in the motor-pool or maintenance shop, the Sol-

diers also conduct combat-recovery operations, which require them to leave the comfort of the FOB to retrieve equipment that has broken down or been disabled, said 2nd Lt. David R. Hampton III of Key West, Fla.

"We have mechanics going out on the roads all the time," he said. "We train them to be able to go on patrols as well as handle the variety of equipment that we maintain."

When the maintenance company needs to go recover a piece of equipment it means that it is going to be a difficult job because the equipment couldn't be self-recovered, said Hampton.

To recover a wheeled vehicle, the maintenance company sends a wrecker, but to recover a tank requires a greater towing capacity, he said. In these cases the company uses another tank, which provides both security and towing ability.

The Soldiers, though well-trained on recovery operations, had to train for conducting convoy and gun-truck operations. They have also had to begin cross-training for the maintenance of the variety of equipment that is part of the new Army UA structure.

"We have track mechanics and wheeled-vehicle mechanics, but they all are getting a lot of experience working on the different types of equipment," Hampton said.



Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, part of Task Force Liberty, prepare a disabled tank to be moved.

CA helps Iraqis back on their feet

Story, photo by Sgt. Blake Kent
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD-MORA, SAMARRA, Iraq – The four-man civil affairs team from Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora patrols the city of Samarra and the surrounding villages, aiding in the reconstruction of Iraqi public utilities and offices.

“The overall intent of our mission is to disengage the military by getting the Iraqi government and people back on their feet,” said Capt. Rod McCauley of Niantic, Conn., 411th Civil Affairs Battalion. “The biggest thing we are doing is aiding in the transition from military control to civilian control.”

The team oversees projects in Samarra, Al Huwaisi, Al Qalaa, Al Somon and Al Ereqqa and has 41 projects currently in progress and another 45 that are already pending approval.

There has been roughly \$24 million put into projects in and around the Samarra area over the past six months, said 1st Lt. Doug Maritato of Rockway, N.J., projects officer, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor.

A normal patrol for the team consists of many stops, both visiting projects already in progress, other offices to see what supplies they need, and even more stops to scout out locations for new projects.

“We try and find out what kinds of things the people need to operate and then the next time we make patrols we try and bring it to them or provide them the money to get the materials on the local economy,” Maritato said.



1st Lt. Doug Maritato of Rockway, N.J., Task Force 3-69, gives money to the manager of the Meteorological Center in Samarra, Iraq, for repairing the locks in the Center.

The team is able to help the government offices acquire small items, such as security locks and office materials, to larger project items, such as building repairs and vehicles.

One project, the Samarra Fire Station, is in need of fire-fighting equipment and more fire trucks.

“The station serves more than 200,000 people with only one working fire truck,” McCauley said. “They are definitely going to need some help.”

The civil affairs team is already working on getting the station breathing equipment, suits, axes and other needed tools.

The team makes trips into the city on a weekly basis, often taking fire from anti-Iraqi forces, but the Soldiers have yet to be deterred from their mission.

Building troop morale with construction

By Sgt. Blake Kent
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD-MORA, SAMARRA, Iraq – Soldiers of the 17th Signal Battalion from Kitzingen, Germany, broke from their normal routine and spent their week extending their communication site on Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora., March 10

The Soldiers provide all the communications, including the classified and unclassified Internet lines and phones for the Samarra area.

“Nothing gets communicated without us,” said Spc. Travis Gollaher of Salt Lake City, Utah. “This place would be an

island without communications, it’s what makes America able to fight and win wars; we communicate better than anybody, and communication is the key to success.”

Other assets the signal team provides include antennas for the Mobile Radio Satellite communications in vehicles and line of site antennas that receive and send communications from node centers across the country.

Without the assets provided by the 17th, communications would be limited to Single Channel Ground & Airborne Radio Systems, the standard radio used by U.S. Forces in Iraq.

“Our main job is monitoring the equipment and troubleshooting any problems

that arise,” Gollaher said.

The Soldiers, with increased requirements for their communications, needed added space, so they decided to create it themselves, Gollaher said. They used scrap wood they found around the FOB and reused the nails from the wood, as well as their own ingenuity and creativity in design, to expand their current area.

Gollaher, who was deployed with the 17th in Mosul, Iraq, said the work and living conditions they have been working on in Samarra are a large improvement on the conditions they endured while living at the Mosul airfield two years ago.

Soldiers in Samarra

Restoring public order



Children and teenagers employed by the city clean up trash off of the street in Samarra March 9.

Coalition Forces provide guidance to Iraqis

Story, photos by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE BRASSFIELD-MORA, SAMARRA, Iraq - All over Iraq, Coalition Forces are working with Iraqi forces to rebuild the country's infrastructure. This effort includes training and employing different types of Iraqi forces such as police, public order battalions and Ministry of Interior commandos.

Along with security forces, local Iraqis are also at work trying to rebuild their towns and cities. The POB helps this by providing security.

"The POB is an element assigned to the Ministry of Interior," said Staff Sgt. Brian Little, a U.S. Army National Guard Soldier working as POB liaison with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor. "They are trained like police, but they receive a little additional train-

ing. Their primary focus is to establish control and stabilization in areas where the normal Iraqi police haven't been able to. (It is) a unit that has been organized to respond to a large civil disturbance."

The POB's tactics for establishing order are different from a regular police unit. They take more of a military approach to their work, Little said.

Their operations include cordon and search tactics, vehicle and pedestrian checkpoints and other missions that Coalition Forces are currently doing to establish security in Iraq, said Little, who is a police officer from Staten Island, New York.

The POB receives the same training as other Coalition elements before going on patrols in their prospective destinations, said 1st Lt. Barry Humphrey, fire direction officer.

"We're teaching these guys police tactics and some infantry tactics," Humphrey said. "These guys are fairly young, and some of them are prior service. Right now we are teaching them to police up

Soldiers in Samarra

der



Two schoolboys ask a Public Order Battalion officer about his job during a POB visit to the city of Al Qalah on the outskirts of Samarra March 9.



Sgt. Eric David, a Public Order Battalion liaison attached to 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor, talks with POB officers before a mission in Samarra March 9.

Samarra and take back the city (from the insurgents) on their own.”

“Prior to coming to us, (the POB) went through a Joint Forces Academy with Austrians and U.S. forces,” Little said. “They also

went through a police academy and once they arrived here, international police advisors and U.S. forces trained them in close-quarter battle, clearing rooms, cordon and search operations and short-range marksmanship.”

The training started off slow, Humphrey, the native of Montgomery, Ala. said, but the POB has been progressing well and soon it won’t need help from the Coalition.

“At first it was kind of rough,” Humphrey said. “We try to take them through a crawl, walk and run phase. Right now they are at the walk stage. Overall it’s going pretty good.”

While the POB is in charge of its own missions, Coalition Forces help when on patrol, Humphrey said. He added that since the Iraqi forces are fairly new at what they are doing, there are still a few small corrections that need to be made before they take total control of their missions.

“When we work with the POB, we try to help in planning and executing their missions,” Little said. “They take most of their mission tasking from their own chain of command, with a little additional mission tasking from (us). We try to meld the two together so we can work as effectively as possible.”

known insurgents in certain areas, Little said.

“On occasion we have been informed where (improvised explosive devices) were located, who planted the IEDs and where that person was,” Little said. “We were able to go to the house and make a detention. I don’t think that many forces are able to do that as effectively as ours are. They bring a degree of trust to the neighborhood that the people there don’t necessarily have with the Iraqi army or the U.S. Army. When they see their own people on the ground in a policing role as opposed to a military role, mentally they’re more comfortable with that.”

One of the most important aspects the POB uses to gain peoples’ trust is through open communication.



1st Lt. Barry Humphrey, a 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor fire direction officer, shows a Public Order Battalion officer how to work his radio.

In some cases, Coalition Forces’ help is needed, but in other cases, the POB can do the job more effectively than any other element.

“There are some missions (the POB) are not capable of performing,” Little said. “There are other missions that they are more capable of performing than any other unit we have on the ground. They are most effective particularly in missions involving humanitarian aid, intelligence gathering and investigations.”

“We have been very successful in going into certain neighborhoods and establishing a rapport (with the locals).”

The reputation gained from helping people leads to bigger and better things, such as capturing

“We try to get the POB to focus every mission on having open dialogue with the populace,” Little said. “We teach them to use courtesy and respect when dealing with the people, but at the same time be able to respond aggressively when engaged.”

They’ve been successful so far. The people respond well.”

The POB uses presence patrols to get in touch with local Iraqis.

“Once you develop that rapport, you continue to

Soldiers in Samarra

'Volunteers' train Iraqi policemen

Story, photos by Spc. Adam Phelps
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE COBRA, Iraq – Tennessee National Guard Soldiers are training Iraqi police to perform a better job.

Working together is the key to a positive working relationship. The Troop L, 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team, not only train together with the Iraqis but also go on joint operations with them, making sure the training hits home.

In the cities of Jalula and Sadiyah, Iraq, two police departments have already been established.

"They just need advanced training on proper techniques and procedures," said Sgt. James Abbott, Troop L, from Springfield, Tenn.

"Here it's all about training."

Abbott is a street officer on patrol back in the states. In Iraq he has found a way to use his experience to help Iraq in the fight for democracy.

"It's one of those things you start missing after a while," commented Abbott, who has been activated since June 7, 2004. "It's just one of those jobs you enjoy, because you don't get paid much."

Implementing his law enforcement background, Abbott put forth an agenda to train the Iraqi Police force.

The plan helps the IP learn the basic fundamentals of law enforcement, teaching them personal protection and maintaining order.

"We've set up a training program based on the train-the-trainer concept," said Abbott. "Our goal is to take the officers with us for eight weeks and train them. Then, after the eight-week period, we send them back to their departments and they train their officers."

"The group of Iraqi police we are training now is a good group of guys," said Sgt. James Hobbs, Troop L, from Atlanta Ga. "A few might require additional training, but as a whole the train-the-trainer program



Sgt. James Hobbs from Atlanta Ga. shows Iraqi police how to fire the AK47 assault rifle using proper firing techniques.

"A lot risk their lives to come here to be trained."

-- Sgt. James Abbott
Soldier training Iraqi police
Troop L, 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team

is proving to be beneficial."

Instead of U.S. Soldiers being on the streets, the people of Iraq are witnessing firsthand their own people doing a great job, keeping their communities and neighborhoods safe.

"Seeing the IP doing things they couldn't do before and understanding more is part of the reward," Hobbs said. "We also get to watch them do the job they need to do to operate in their own country."

But being a member of the IP does come with a cost.

"There is still part of the population resisting the Coalition Forces effort," Abbott said.

Soldiers and members of the IP and Iraqi army still endure daily attacks. Many of the attacks are in the form of improvised explosive devices, mortar attacks, land mines and small arms fire.

"A lot risk their lives to come here to



Sgt. James Hobbs from Atlanta Ga. shows Iraqi police how to fire the AK47 assault rifle using proper firing techniques. Coalition Forces have been using the train-the-trainer concept in training them.

be trained. I enjoy sharing the knowledge I have with them," Abbott said.

Even with a set plan and determination,



Sgt. James Hobbs, 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team, instructs Iraqi Policemen on correct firing position and technique at Forward Operating Base Cobra, Sadiyah, Iraq. Coalition Forces are training the Iraqis using the train-the-trainer concept.

the training catches an occasional snag.

Training the police at times can be a problem, because of the language barrier. It takes a long time for certain things to be clearly understood.

"We try to stay away from using interpreters in training because a lot of things are lost in translation," said Abbott.

A lot of the translators haven't had military-type training. So a lot of the terms we use are misunderstood, he said.

"We figure if we have Iraqi officers already trained we can . . . tell a trained officer to take other policemen and explain things like the proper sight picture when firing the 9mm pistol or AK 47 assault rifle," Abbott said.

It's easier to train one individual on how to do his job properly and have him share the information, Hobbs said.

Even after solving one problem, Soldiers still encounter barriers, but never give up.

One of the biggest problems with training the IP is the lack of proper equipment. In the U.S., even the smallest departments, with equipment that is almost outdated, are light years ahead of the police here, Hobbs said.

"We're trying to advance the training for them and until we get the proper equipment, hopefully a lot of the training we give now isn't done in vain," Abbott said.

The IP are eager to learn, the Soldiers said, they've just been used to doing things their way.

"Some were police officers in the past before the liberation of Iraq," said Abbott.

"Their used to doing a lot of the same things. The difference between now and when we first got here is tremendous," said Hobbs.

"When I was given the opportunity to do this, I jumped on it! It gave me the chance to work with police officers. It doesn't matter if they are from Iraq or if they're American," Abbott added.

'Grunts' fix Cobra MWR

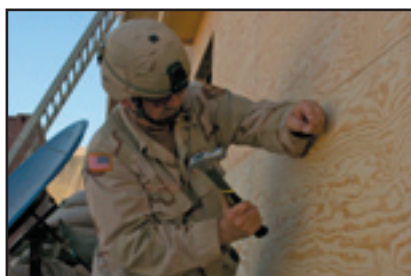
Story, photo by Spc. Adam Phelps
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE COBRA, Iraq – Soldiers are working together to make their Morale, Welfare and Recreation building more accommodating for one another at Forward Operating Base Cobra, Sadiyah, Iraq.

Tennessee National Guard troops are volunteering their personal time to add on an addition to the already existing MWR facility.

Soldiers offering to help from the Troop L, 3rd Squadron, 278th Regimental Combat Team, is the reason the building is getting done.

"The MWR resources were in bad shape when we first got here. It needed to be painted and cleaned. It was filthy," said Spc. Ray Spain, Troop L, 3-278th RCT, and native of Greenbrier Tenn.



A Soldier from the 3rd Squadron 278th Regimental Combat Team hammers in a nail while helping to build additions to the Morale Welfare and Recreation center.

First Sgt. Robert Perry is in charge of expanding the MWR and leads the effort in cleaning it up. Soldiers volunteer their free time to help in the construction of the addition.

Some people that have worked on the project are civilians. They have donated their time to paint and mop floors. They also

played an important role in the clean-up effort.

"Now, when we walk in, we don't feel like it's a dirty environment since everything is painted and clean. It looks like someone cares about the environment now," Spain said.

In addition to all that they have already done, 278th Soldiers put barriers around the MWR and added a tool room. Now, valuable tools can be properly secured.

In the future, an extra room for laundry service will be added.

"Soldiers here go out on missions for up to 10 to 14 hours. Then, after working all day, they have to stand in line for more than an hour because there are only eight phones," Spain said.

"The 278th command is making an effort with what they have to make Cobra during off duty as accommodating as they can. Especially when it comes to using the phone to call family and internet access," said Spain. "With the addition of eight more phones guys won't have to waste that hour and a half of down time."

"Sometimes the line is long with the whole battalion waiting on eight phones. The addition of eight more phones will greatly improve the quality of life and morale," said Spc. Richard Ward, 3-278th RCT, and native of Cookeville, Tenn.

NGO conference highlights 'New Dawn'

Story, photo

by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

FORWARDING OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq – Iraq's agricultural potential dominated the agenda at the New Dawn Non-Governmental Organization Conference, held by Task Force Liberty here Feb. 27.

The conference came less than a month after the first free election in Iraq's modern history. Over 256 people, representing 57 different organizations, attended the conference, including international and Iraqi non-governmental organizations, Iraqi government agencies and Coalition Forces.

NGOs are organizations, usually non-profit, that work independently of governments. They're a very effective way for Iraqis to get assistance, said Maj. Rob Smithers, 411th Civil Affairs Battalion and deputy director of the Civil-Military Coordination Center here.

"Our main effort was to design a conference to allow NGOs to interface with each other," Smithers said. Economic development is one of the most important issues for NGOs and Iraqis alike, he added.

"It was tailored toward agriculture," said Staff Sgt. Andres Mendez, operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge, 411th Civil Affairs Battalion. "Our thought process was to get Iraq out of the oil mindset. Before oil, their economy was agriculture based."

Agriculture was among the items on the conference agenda, which included lectures and breakout sessions for attendees to meet and network together.

"Agriculture is key for this area," Smithers said. "Whatever the NGOs can bring to help them get back on their feet economically is definitely a priority for this conference."

One of those NGOs is Global Business Group, represented at the conference by Andrew Robert Duke, GBG's executive in charge of new business development. GBG is already importing seed, Duke said, and working with Coalition civil affairs in Taji to identify spe-

cific spots in a sector troops call IED alley where farming projects started by Saddam Hussein can be revitalized. Duke said anything can grow here.

"This is the fertile crescent," said Duke. "This is the cradle of civilization. This is the area Alexander the Great conquered so he could have access to the farming economy. It's obvious that this area is tremendously fertile... you can literally grow almost anything here – I mean it's amazing. People outside of here don't have any concept how robust the agricultural economy was, and could be again."

Iraq has an amazingly robust farming infrastructure, said Duke, including "hundreds of millions of dollars worth of irrigation projects." These projects require lifting stations, Duke said, which could be helped by easily-made infrastructure improvements such as more gas stations.

"If you want to farm, and you need to lift water out of the river, and you need gasoline for your generators so you can power your pump," Duke said. "If you have to drive 50 kilometers to go get gas, you're out of the farming business."

"These are fertile lands that can yield a



Sheik Kareem Mahani Hashim, left, speaks with Dr. S.B. Ali Sabah Bahaadin Ali, right, at the New Dawn Non-Governmental Organization Conference, held by Task Force Liberty at Forward Operating Base Danger, Tikrit, Iraq. Sheik Hashim is with the Iraqi Institute of Peace.

significant bounty," said Task Force Liberty Commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto in his opening remarks at the conference. Iraq's security has improved, he said, and will continue to get better if Iraq's economy improves. NGOs can be part of this process, Taluto added.

"We will work with you in any way we can, because the people in North-Central Iraq are ready for your support," Taluto said.

"Part of the purpose of this conference is for the NGOs to see for themselves exactly what the security situation is here," Smithers said. "We've got representatives of security from each of the local provinces here today to discuss, as a matter of fact, how things are in their province, and how we can keep these NGOs safe if they choose to return."

"These are fertile lands that can yield a significant bounty"

-- Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto
Commander, Task Force Liberty

Major Gen. Mohammed Abdulah Hussein, deputy governor of Salah Ad Din Province, attended the conference to discuss security and coordinate Iraqi government assistance of NGOs. Aggressive follow-up by Iraqi Security Forces after insurgent attacks, insurgent arrests and insurgent deaths have increased security, Hussein said – and the cooperation of Iraqi citizens.

“They’re finding out that 90 percent of insurgent attacks kill Iraqis,” he said. “Now they cooperate with Iraqi Security Forces.”

“The biggest improvement is Iraqi Security Forces themselves,” Taluto said. “They gained great confidence from the election. They know the way. They have great confidence in protecting their own citizens.”

Iraqi native and consultant Mayasa Alnaimy, however, felt frustrated by the conference, and said others were too. Dialogue is stalled, she said, because the Iraqi NGOs ask for funding without proposing how they plan to use it. The Iraqis and NGOs need organizational training on the grass roots level – to include instruction on proposal writing, she said.

“The international organizations should teach the Iraqi NGOs to write proposals so they can get funding,” she said.

“Clearly they were frustrated,” Mendez said. There are plans to teach proposal writing, he added, along with using college-graduate interpreters to enhance dialogue.

Proposals are the world standard for securing funding, and a change for Iraq from Operation Iraqi Freedom I, Mendez said.

“Politely smiling and asking for money doesn’t work anymore,” Mendez said. “This is a democracy, so there is a process to secure funding.”

Sheik Kareem Mahani Hashim felt the New Dawn NGO Conference held out hope for Iraq, summed up by the conference name.

“It means a new morning, new life, new hope, for Iraq,” he said.



Second Lt. Joshua McLaughlin, a fire support officer with the 116th Brigade Combat Team's Task Force 3-116 Armor, hands a stuffed animal to the Tobzawa village leader's daughter during a visit.

Coalition shares gift of giving

By Capt. Monte Hibbert
116th BCT Public Affairs

TOBZAWA, Iraq- Iraqi and Coalition Forces delivered stuffed animals donated by Americans to disadvantaged children in the small village of Tobzawa, Iraq, March 9.

The combined force, including soldiers of the 116th Brigade Combat Team's Task Force 3-116 Armor, headquartered in La Grande, Ore., delivered more than 150 toys in an effort to improve relationships between themselves and

members in this small community southwest of Kirkuk.

“The children in the village of Tobzawa are extremely poor and have very little to play with,” said 2nd Lt. Joshua McLaughlin, a fire support officer with Company B, TF 3-116 Armor who helped deliver the toys. “The children were very excited to receive the new toys and these efforts continue to strengthen the relationship between the Iraqi army, Coalition Forces and local citizens.”

The stuffed animals were donated by Americans through Operation Crayon, a program through which individuals and organizations donate school supplies, toys and other items for distribution by military personnel to children.

According to TF 3-116 soldiers, toys are not the only things being delivered.

“We make it a point to hit every village in our operations area with something like this,” said McLaughlin. “We have also distributed water, candy and other items. We just built 125 packets of school supplies for giving out.”



Spc. Aaron Gilmore, a fire support driver attached to the 116th Brigade Combat Team's Task Force 3-116 Armor, distributes toys to children in the village of Tobzawa March 9.

Coalition provides MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Story, photos by Sgt. Matthew Acosta
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE McHENRY, Iraq - Army medics in a combat zone are not only a vital necessity for Soldiers, but in many ways can benefit the surrounding communities and the local civilians.

Medical personnel from Company C, 145th Support Battalion, assisted with the medical treatment of local villagers during a visit to the village of Saadina, Iraq, March 18.

Medical supplies, six medics and three physician's assistants were escorted to the village medical clinic where the Soldiers set up a make-shift pharmacy and utilized the examination rooms for the medical treatment of the villagers.

Many people came from surrounding villages and lined up outside the clinic walls waiting to enter the facility for treatment by the "magical healers."

"The whole point of the (medical assistance visit) was to get quality medical care to those who otherwise won't be able to get the attention they need," said Capt. Heidi Monroe, physician's assistant. "This is a 'hearts and minds' mission; it's all about care."

Monroe said soon after they started seeing and treating patients, the word that the Army medics are in town manages to spread quickly and Iraqi families start arriving and waiting in line for their turn.

"The Iraqi people have so much faith in the American medicine, they think we can cure everything," said Monroe. "The truth is that most of the sicknesses we see can be treated with a little preventive medicine."

Due to the poor living conditions, many of the villagers shared the same sicknesses, requiring similar treatment, she said.

"The poor air quality accounted for most of the asthma; the dirty water used for drinking, cooking and bathing is probably what attributed to the amount of urinary tract infections, diarrhea and skin conditions as well as many other sicknesses," Monroe said.

After the patients were examined by physician's assistants, they were given written prescriptions to take outside to the pharmacist's counter where they were given medicines for their illnesses.

Although the medicines were being distributed to the Iraqi people by Coalition Soldiers, the medicines were donated by American health institutions and were not purchased by the U.S. government, she said.



Idaho National Guardsman Spc. Corinne Newman, medic, Company C, 145th Support Battalion, Task Force Liberty, reads the blood pressure of an Iraqi patient. Capt. Heidi Monroe, physician's assistant, listens to the translator (out of screen) describe the woman's medical problem.



Idaho National Guardsman Spc. Cara Wortley, medic, Company C, 145th Support Battalion, Task Force Liberty, packages a dosage of medicine into a plastic bag.

"(The medicines were donated) to treat those who cannot afford or access proper (health) treatment," she added.

The medical visit was projected to last five hours but due to the turn-out of patients, the visit was extended.

"We were supposed to wrap things up at 2 p.m., but because of the amount of people who showed up, we extended the patient treatment for an additional hour," said Sgt. 1st Class Albert Williams, civil affairs projects liaison, 116th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Liberty.

Williams said more than 150 patients were treated during the visit.

Spc. Kara Wortley, medic, said they were able to treat many medical conditions such as colds or skin rashes but for those who need continuing health care for chronic conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes, they would have to seek care from local Iraqi medical clinics.

"Although we cannot treat or cure everyone," Monroe said, "providing medical care for the Iraqi people is showing them we care and are here to help in any way we can."

Wortley said she was proud to help the Iraqi people.

"Helping out the communities in this way, aside from your job here, makes you feel like you are serving more of a purpose other than just cleaning your rifle every day," she said. "It makes you feel really good inside."

Task Force celebrates Easter with service

Story, photo by Spc. Adam Phelps
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Iraq – The 42nd Infantry Division Chaplains and division band joined together in worship at a special Easter sunrise service in Tikrit, Iraq, March 27.

“This morning we had our Easter sunrise service, and all three of our Protestant chaplains helped out,” said Chaplain (Capt.) Alex

Knowles, 642nd Military Intelligence Battalion and native of Lockport, N.Y.

The service consisted of music by the 42nd Infantry Division Band, singing, Easter prayer, a skit, a short sermon, a full gospel choir, the Lord’s Prayer in both English and Aramaic, and a benediction.

“Those that were present here today identified with not only Jesus’ death and burial but His resurrection. That’s what this service is about today,” said Capt. Harold Frelix, liaison officer for the 278th Regimental Combat Team, and native of Nashville, Tenn.

“The skit was a demonstration and illustration of the resurrection story and Chaplain Robinson wrapped up the whole message of Easter in his short homilies,” Knowles said. “The band was outstanding once again. They bring a lot to our service and the full gospel choir brought a whole new aspect to our Easter service. All this was a nice way to bring all of the worshippers together.

“It’s important for Soldiers to reflect on their faith and beliefs. This helps them be better Soldiers and give them meaning in their life,” said Knowles.

“Everyone here will probably go home tonight and call loved ones back at home and say, ‘Happy Easter, guess what we did this morning? We had a sunrise service at an ancient church,’” Knowles said. “Experiences like these are something they can separate from a repetitious time.”



Troopers sing during the sunrise service at Forward Operating Base Danger, Tikrit, Iraq.

Women continue to make history

By Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq – From the White House to the schools of Iraq, women are continuing to break barriers.

Soldiers from Task Force Liberty gathered March 20 at Forward Operating Base Danger’s Morale, Welfare and Recreation center to honor some of those women who have taken a stand for their beliefs, rights and family.

“Women change America’ was the theme of the program to observe women’s history month, and Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto, Task Force commander, said that women have and continue to help towards that continuous change.

“This month has been set aside to mark the historic contributions that American women of every race, class and ethnic background have made in the growth and strength of our nation in countless recorded and unrecorded ways,” Taluto said to the observance attendees.

“Women have played and continue to play a critical economic, cultural and social role in every sphere of life of our nation,” he said. “America would not be the great

country it is without your contributions.”

During Chaplain (Col.) Dan Robinson invocation, he spoke of the women who have decided to stay at home, as well as those who have fought for freedom.

“We give . . . thanks for the women who have both rocked the cradle and given their lives in cause of human freedom in our culture,” Robinson said. “Where would we be without the Dolly Madisons, the Martha Washingtons and the Molly Preachers of our nation’s history? They have brought to the public form heart, soul and the brilliant of mind. Our nation has listened and we are the much wiser and better for it.”

Robinson also spoke about how the Army has come a long way in providing equal opportunities for female Soldiers.

“In our military we are grateful for the strides that we have made in offering equal opportunity to all who qualify regardless of gender,” Robinson said. “In our society and in our world we have much ground yet to cover. As we strive (in Iraq) to establish an outpost of freedom and liberty, let us become a beacon of hope for all women of this region who long for political, religious and personal freedom.”

Taluto said female Soldiers here make up more than seven percent of the task force, which is comprised of over 23,000 Soldiers. He said they serve in ranks ranging from private to colonel and serve in over 140 different military occupational specialties.

“The contribution and sacrifice that you make to this task force can not be overstated,” he said. “Whatever your personal background, we all share in the unique historical significance of Task Force Liberty and your role in it.”

Taluto said women, like those of the task force, have and continue to step forward to take an active role in their futures.

“American women served as early leaders in the forefront of every major progressive social change and movement not only to secure their own rights of suffrage and equal opportunity, but also in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, industrial labor movement, the civil rights movement and others,” Taluto said.

“That leadership continues through your efforts in Task Force Liberty,” he added.

Army moves to new eye protection

Soldier complaints drive service to replace Wiley-X goggles.

**Story, photo
by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson**
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Tikrit, Iraq – The Army is working to make sure Soldiers are wearing the best ballistic eye protection they can get.

Previously, Soldiers who wear corrective lenses would have prescription inserts made to fit their glasses; however it was resulting in the ballistic quality of the glasses being lost, said Maj. Nick Silvestros, chief of division optometry, 50th Main Support Battalion. With the eye protection that is now being issued, Soldiers are keeping the same quality of protection with their glasses as the nonprescription eye wear.

The reason for the change in eye wear is that eye injuries have accounted for 11.5 percent of total battle field injuries combined from both Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, said Capt. Len Burgmyer, a physicians assistant for 42nd Infantry Division Artillery, in a 42nd ID command memorandum.

“‘Eye armor’ must be required during field tactical operations, training or situations where there is risk of combat,” Burgmyer stated in the memorandum. “As ‘body armor’ has become more universally available, Soldiers have benefited from increased survivability on the battlefield.”

Silvestros, a native of Springfield, Ill., said the eye protection Soldiers currently wear has a variety of issues.

“The biggest problems for patients have been the quality, the size issue and then the lens,” said Silvestros. “(The lens) are curved so they have to be made by only certain places and when these certain places make them they lose their ballistic quality.”

The new 0.79 lb. UVEX XC glasses have wrap-around and impact resistant polycarbonate interchangeable lenses, one clear and one grey. They have cushioned temples for non-slip fit and comfort and well as an anti-fog coating. Soldiers can customize the fit of their glasses with lens and temple adjustability, while having peripheral coverage of more than 180 degrees.



Spc. Tracy Duran, a fabricator for Company E, 50th Main Support Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division and a native of Belleville, N.J., gets her eyes checked March 24, by Maj. Nick Silvestros, a native of Springfield, Ill., and chief of division optometry, 50th MSB, at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq.

Another problem that Silvestros said the optometrists are facing is that the majority of Soldiers in the area are not active duty.

“Most of the Soldiers who are here now are National Guard,”

Silvestros said. “National Guard Soldiers aren’t authorized these UVEXs until after ninety days of active duty, so us optometry guys are having to see every Soldier who wears glasses.”

Silvestros said since they want to make sure everyone gets the new eye protection they are rotating through the different bases to fill every Soldiers prescription.

“We said UVEXs are the ones that we want to get because we can manufacture those inserts here,” Silvestros said. “If they are seeing well, we take their prescriptions right off their glasses, if they think it has changed we want to give them the correct prescription.”

He said if Soldiers prescription glasses are still good, they can get the prescription in about five minutes. They can then get the new eye protection to the Soldier that same day or up to three days later. If the Soldiers send in their prescription it could take 10 days for them to receive the glasses by mail.

Units can order the UVEX XC kits through their supply office and Task Force Liberty Soldiers who wear glasses should give a copy of their prescriptions to the optometrist at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq.

Soldiers are authorized to wear Wiley X, Oakley, or UVEX XC sunglasses.

“The biggest problems for patients have been the quality, the size issue and then the lens

*– Maj. Nick Silvestros
chief, division of optometry
50th Main Support Battalion*

Never Forget



Prisoners of the Alach camp, a subcamp of Dachau celebrate their liberation April 29, 1945, by troops of the 42nd Infantry Division.

42nd liberates thousands from Nazi tyranny

The 42nd Infantry Division marks the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp on April 29.

Soldiers from the Rainbow Division helped liberate more than 30,000 inmates of one of Nazi Germany's most notorious death camps. Two other Army units, the 45th Infantry Division and 20th Armored Division, also participated in Dachau's liberation.

Arriving in mid-afternoon on April 29, 1945 with a security detachment, Brig. Gen. Linden Henning, the Rainbow Division deputy commander, accepted the surrender of the camp from its SS guards.

"This day is over, this April 29th, 1945," said Edgar Kupfer-Kobert, one of the prisoners at Dachau. "I will celebrate it for the rest of my life as my second birthday, as the day that gifted me life anew."

A battalion from the 222nd Infantry Regiment secured the camp following Linden's arrival. Soldiers from the division's 242nd Infantry followed the next day while the Rainbow Division continued on its drive to capture Munich on April 30. The war in Europe would end less than two weeks later.

"The crimes done behind the walls of the worst of all Nazi concentration camps, now live only to haunt the memories of the Rainbow men who tore open its gates and first saw its misery," said Technician 3rd Class James Creasman, Headquarters and Headquarter Company, 42nd Infantry Division on May 1, 1945.

The Soldiers serving in the Multinational Division North Central, Iraq are an important part of the Task Force Liberty team. We will always remember our fallen heroes.

Staff Sgt. Todd D. Olson
1st Bn., 128th Inf. Reg.
Samarra, Iraq
Dec. 27

Sgt. 1st Class Mark C. Warren
3rd Bn., 116th Armor
FOB Warrior, Iraq
Jan. 31

Staff Sgt. Steven Bayow
2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt.
Bayji, Iraq
Feb. 4

Sgt. Daniel Torres
2nd Bn., 7th Inf., Regt.
Bayji, Iraq
Feb. 4

Sgt. Rene Knox, Jr.
5th Bn., 7th Cav. Regt.
Balad, Iraq
Feb. 7

Sgt. Chad Lake
5th Bn., 7th Cav. Regt.
Balad, Iraq
Feb. 7

Spc. Dakotah Gooding
5th Bn., 7th Cav. Regt.
Balad, Iraq
Feb. 7

Sgt. 1st Class David Sallie
2nd Bn., 69th Armor
Baqubah, Iraq
Feb. 14

Pfc. David J. Brangman
3rd Bn., 69th Armor
Patrol Base Uvanni, Iraq
Feb. 13

Spc. Justin B. Carter
1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt.
FOB McKenzie, Iraq
Feb. 16

Spc. Jacob Palmatier
1st Bn., 30th Inf. Regt.
Qaryat, Iraq
Feb. 24

Spc. Adriana Salem
3rd Forward Support Bn.
FOB Remagen, Iraq
March 4

Sgt. Paul W. Thomason III
2nd Sqd., 278th Cav.
Kirkuk, Iraq
March 20

Soldier mourned

By Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq - Spc. Adriana Nicole Salem, an ammunition specialist with the 3rd Forward Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty, died when the vehicle she was in rolled over March 4.

Salem's peers remember her for her positive attitude and willingness to tackle any mission.

"She was always ready to go," said Pfc. Nina Blaylock, Salem's best friend. "Back home, her job didn't keep her too busy, so she would always look forward to the deployment where she knew she would be busy doing a mission that would make a difference."

Staff Sgt. Darrin Schmidt of Swanville, Minn., Company B., 50th Main Support Battalion, tightens the chains on a trailer to secure cargo for transport to Forward Operating Base Bernstein, Iraq. (photo by Sgt. Blake Kent, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

